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ABSTRACT

An instructor in speech communication uses camcorders and videotape as a logical extension and complement to the public speaking curriculum. The instructor uses the camcorder as a concrete tool that parallels the more conceptual tool of public speaking. The first round of speeches made by the students is videotaped and only briefly evaluated orally by the other students. At the very next class meeting, the tape is played back and the students and the speaker discuss and comment on the presentation. One assignment, usually the last, requires the student to create and present, directly into a camcorder, a public service announcement (PSA). Students apply the steps of the Motivated Sequence Design to the PSA. One other requirement for the PSA is the use of a visual aid. Ideally, PSAs should be shown to the entire class. Students grow up surrounded by broadcast media and should be given the opportunity to increase their empowering communication knowledge and skills in this area. (The scripts of a PSA written by the instructor and two written by students are attached.) (RS)

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Student-made PSAs (public service announcements): Teaching the Motivated Sequence Design and Other Public Speaking Concepts With a Camcorder

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Introduction

Camcorders have become fairly commonplace in the public speaking classroom. To date, however, they are usually consigned to the role of documenting students' speeches, providing them with the opportunity to review their presentations. Time does not usually allow for playback during the class period, so the videotapes are generally kept in a library or media center where the students are expected, and sometimes assigned, to view their own speeches. Although assignments are meant to encourage the students to review their speeches, there is no guarantee that the students will do so. Some teachers record the speeches on the students' own videotape, improving, perhaps, the likelihood they they will actually review them.

Although reviewing speeches in this way provides useful feedback for the students, I have been experimenting with ways to use the videotape, and the camcorder itself, that may contribute more to the students' public speaking learning experience, providing, I believe, a more reflective and expansive understanding and evaluation of public speaking concepts and skills. Specifically, this paper is intended to encourage public speaking teachers to use camcorders and videotape to do more than simply record speeches for the students to review, although a suggestion will be made for enhancing that activity. I would especially like to encourage teachers to think of the use of camcorders and videotape as a logical extension and complement to the public speaking curriculum. There are parallels between public speaking and electronic media communication, and recognizing and addressing these parallels, I believe, will improve the students' understanding and competency in each.

Introducing the camcorder/public speaking: tools for communication

Because I use the camcorder extensively in my public speaking classes, I make sure that the students know this on the first day of class. I get the camcorder out, show it around, and try to desensitize, if you will, the discomfort some students may have about being videotaped. I further tell them that, for one assignment, they will be required to speak directly into the camcorder (PSA assignment). It may seem "too much," some will

say, to ask the students to get comfortable with both public speaking and a camcorder. But I express to them what I consider to be a useful parallel between the two: both public speaking and videotaping should be considered media; tools that we can use to accomplish our real goal, communication. The reticence I have observed in students speaking to an audience or speaking to a camcorder often stems from an exaggerated fixation with the medium. If students can come to accept that they are simply learning how to use tools with which they may be unfamiliar, in a safe environment with others who are also learning, the focus then becomes how to use the tools most effectively.

This discussion about tools leads me to ask the students if any of them have ever used a typewriter, or word processor. Most of them agree they have, and laugh at such a question. "How about paper and pencil?" I ask. This elicits more curious laughter. I then ask them to think about two things:

First, I ask them to think about how they learned to use these tools, and how they felt as they were learning to use them. Everyone who writes or types has been through the experience of learning to write or type. At first, it may have seemed awkward, but, eventually, almost without being aware, we reached a level of competence where we could then concentrate on why we learned to write or type in the first place: to communicate.

Second, I ask them to tell me what they think about when they write a letter to a friend. Do they consciously focus on the mechanics of using a pen? "No," they usually say; they think about their friend and focus on the thoughts and feelings they want to communicate.

These two concepts, learning how to use communication tools and focussing on your audience and message, are the very ones I want students to hold on to as they learn to present effective speeches. In this way, the camcorder, an electrical/mechanical device like a typewriter or word processor, is used as a concrete tool that parallels the more conceptual tool of public speaking.[1]

Group viewing the first videotaped speech

After completing a presentation, especially the first, a student is likely to be in an emotional state not very conducive to reflection. Although many instructors believe that immediate feedback from the teacher and other students is valuable, the possibility remains that the speaker could also benefit from having a little distance placed between the speech and the feedback. To this end, the first round of speeches in my public speaking class are very short (1 to 2 minutes), videotaped, and only briefly evaluated orally by the other students.

At the very next class meeting, the videotape is played back, and paused after viewing some portion of each student's speech. At this time, the speaker, just having watched her- or himself, is asked to make comments about what she or he has seen and heard. In this way, the speaker becomes part of the audience, and is being asked to react to the speech as a member of an audience. Other students are then asked to comment on the presentation, at which time a discussion usually ensues. The speaker and the other students become engaged in reflection, evaluation, and communication with each other, not only concerning the presentation, but also concerning the speaker's impressions from both a speaker's and audience member's perspectives.

The first value of this practice is that, with the somewhat more relaxed state of the speaker, a meta-communication discussion can occur that allows the speaker to participate more objectively. For example, the discussion may lead into talk about how different members of the audience may have reacted differently to one or more features of the presentation. Second, while viewing the videotape, other students are not thinking about the speech they are about to give, as they probably were during the class when the speeches were given. This allows them to focus more attention on the presentation of other students' speeches and critique more constructively. Third, by dedicating one class period to viewing students' presentations, it ensures that, at least once during the course, the students will review their presentations. Demonstrating the value of viewing their own speech has encouraged most students to go to the media center to review their subsequent speeches.

The reviewing of videotape in class is time consuming but, I believe, invaluable. There is not enough time to view every speech in its entirety; about 30 seconds of each student's speech is shown, followed by a few minutes of discussion. This activity is not meant to replace the valuable, immediate responses of the audience members that occur right after a speech; it is only meant to intensify and reinforce the learning experience.

PSAs (public service announcements) and the MSD (Motivated Sequence Design)

One assignment during the course, usually the last, requires the students to create and present, directly into a camcorder, a public service announcement (PSA). Television PSAs are noncommercial advertisements that ask viewers to adopt certain behaviors (i.e., use seat belts; don't smoke; don't drink and drive), or to support certain community organizations (i.e., Red Cross; Boys Club; charities). Another form of the PSA is the broadcast, videotaped message from a "concerned citizen" presenting a position on a community issue that may or may not be controversial (although some broadcasters distinguish these messages from PSAs by calling them Viewer Editorials). For this assignment, the PSA is the "concerned citizen" type, consisting of a five sentence speech of persuasion, following the five-step format of the Motivated Sequence Design.[2]

Originally, the goal of this assignment was to provide students with an opportunity to develop and practice the skills and processes as they apply to a different kind of public presentation; a television broadcast. However, having given this assignment for the past couple of years, I have discovered more similarities than differences between public speaking and speaking to a camera. I now find that the similarities provide reinforcement for some of the concepts that have been discussed in class during the quarter.

The first similarity was mentioned above: that the goal of speaking to an audience, or to a camera, is to communicate, and while skills need to be developed in either case, that goal should be the primary concern. In the case of an audience, public speaking teachers often encourage the students to keep in mind that they are trying to

communicate with a group of individual persons, not a mob. In the same way, students are asked to keep in mind the individuals who eventually will be watching and listening to the videotaped message, rather than thinking only of the camera lens that is focussed upon them. Again, they are also encouraged to concentrate on the purpose of their presentation: to communicate information and ideas. If they believe in their purpose, are well prepared, and aim for the goal of communicating, the persons watching and listening are likely to be reached.

Obviously, the major difference between the two types of presentations is that there is no immediate interaction with an audience, due to the lack of direct feedback, in the videotape session. (I actually have each student present to the camera without the rest of the class in the room; the students were having too much difficulty focussing on the camera when others were present.) However, the PSA assignment does provide the added dimension that students must strive to imagine how an audience might react to their presentation. At this point, I will usually remind them of the analogy of writing a letter to a friend, asking them to keep in mind the response they might expect.

While delivery concepts have been reinforced with the PSA assignment, I have discovered that it also provides an excellent opportunity to enhance and reinforce understanding and experience with the persuasive speech pattern of the Motivated Sequence Design (MSD). As part of the introduction to this assignment, I engage the students in a discussion about the persuasive techniques used in television advertising. Using the five steps of the MSD, it is relatively easy to illustrate how advertisers 1) get our Attention (questions, conflict, startling facts), 2) identify a Need (dirty dishes, bad breath, crime), 3) present a means for Satisfaction (soap, mouthwash, security alarms), 4) help us Visualize the results (clean dishes, friends, security), and 5) call for an Action (buy, call now). With this approach, not only do students see the application of this persuasive pattern in the real world; they develop a better understanding of how thoughtful organization helps produce more effective communication.

The students are then asked to apply these same steps to a PSA by stating a community problem that needs addressing, suggesting what should be done about it, and

telling us what we can do, right now, to help. They are required to do this by writing one, and only one, sentence for each step of the MSD. (I do allow phrases, single words, sounds, or even nonverbals for the Attention step.) I have found that requiring students to write only one sentence for each step helps them in another, important way: developing well written main points.

For all speech assignments in my class, I require the students to write one, single, declarative sentence for each main point in their outline. While some teachers may require the same for subpoints, and others may not require sentences at all, I believe that there is value in having students express, in sentence form, the main points they plan to present. In my experience, some students have great difficulty with this, preferring to give a brief statement for a main point, and elaborating on that statement in the subpoints. My argument is that main points should be written in a way that clearly indicate the parameters of the supporting information that will follow each main point. While the main points need not be so specific as to make the subpoints redundant, they should be detailed enough to imply what supporting examples or details will follow to elaborate on the concerns raised in the main points. When students are forced to be concise, limited to one sentence for each step of the MSD, they are challenged, but have demonstrated the ability to express their main points with appropriate completeness. The single sentence restriction has helped them express their main points so well, I am planning to use it earlier in the quarter with exercises in preparation for their other speeches.[3]

One other requirement for the PSA assignment is the use of a visual aid. I find that this requirement reinforces the value of providing information through multiple channels, an important consideration for a brief communication event like a PSA. Once again, television advertising serves as a useful model. Some students may simply use a large card with a phone number or address that they also state, while others may use a photo or object to complement their theme.

As stated earlier, this assignment is usually done by having the students come into the classroom, one at a time, to present their PSAs to the camera. I allow them to use note cards, as I would for any speech, but the number of sentences is so few, they

sometimes have the presentation memorized. It is important, I believe, not to focus on the performance aspects of their presentation. I make it very clear that I am grading the assignment primarily on the preparation that went into the PSA (content, organization), and that the delivery portion is more of an opportunity for them to have the experience of talking directly to a camera. Performance anxiety is bound to be high, and a teacher's patience may be tested. I limit each student to two tries without reading, but ask them to muddle through as best as they can on the third try. In this way, each student should feel that the experience was somewhat successful, even with delivery mistakes, as long as the preparation was done well.

Ideally, all of the PSAs should be shown to the entire class. This provides each student with feedback about her or his own PSA, as well as with an opportunity to learn from the presentations made by others. In my situation, I leave the tape in a videotape player just outside the room during my final exam. As students finish, they can go out and watch each others' PSAs. I often walk out with the last student to find the rest of the class huddled around the television, enjoying and commenting on each others' work.

Conclusion

This discussion was meant to encourage teachers, public speaking and others, to more effectively utilize videotape and camcorders as tools for the practice and evaluation of communication skills and concepts. Students grow up surrounded by broadcast media, and should be given the opportunity to increase their empowering communication knowledge and skills in this area as a complement to learning to speak to a live audience. The methods discussed above will not only give students this opportunity, but will also enhance and reinforce the skills and concepts we strive to teach in the public speaking classroom.

Notes

1. For a wonderful discussion on the acquisition of new skills, particularly applied to public speaking, see Chapter 1, Sprague J. & Stuart D. (1992). The Speaker's Handbook, (3rd ed.). New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

2. A description and explanation of Alan Monroe's "Motivated Sequence Design" is available in practically every public speaking text, including the latest edition of his original text: Gronbeck, B. E., German, K., Ehninger, D., & Monroe, A. H. (1992). Principles of Speech Communication, (11th brief ed.). New York: HarperCollins.

3. A colleague has been reviewing a new public speaking text that contains exercises asking the student to write seven sentence speeches using the problem-solution, causal, and Motivated Sequence patterns. Unfortunately, it is a blind review and, therefore, I have no information on the author, title, or publication date (soon, I expect).

On the following pages are three examples of PSA scripts; one written by me, and two written by students. You will notice some typed words scratched out and written over. I encourage my students to write the PSA, try it, and feel free to make changes right up to the minute before they present. This is done to encourage them to find oral language that is more appropriate and effective than the written language they are inclined to use. They should try the PSA, ideally into a camcorder or tape recorder, and listen to determine if the words they use are really the kind of words they would use when talking to a friend, or if some of the phrases sound awkward. They almost always discover that some words are too "print-bound," and that some phrases just don't roll off the tongue very well.

Sample "script" for PSA assignment. By Rob Dewis.

MOTIVATED SEQUENCE DESIGN

ATTENTION STEP AN OLD SAYING GOES, "IF YOU CAN'T SAY SOMETHING NICE, DON'T SAY ANYTHING AT ALL"

PROBLEM THE PROBLEM WITH THAT PHILOSOPHY IS THAT WITH ALL THE BIG AND LITTLE PROBLEMS WE ENCOUNTER IN LIFE, YOU MIGHT SPEND MOST OF YOUR TIME NOT SAYING ANYTHING AT ALL.

SOLUTION HERE AT DE ANZA COLLEGE, WE ~~OFFER~~ HAVE SOME ~~GREAT~~ SPEECH CLASSES THAT ~~WILL~~ 'll HELP YOU LEARN TO SAY WHAT YOU WANT AND NEED TO SAY TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN YOUR SCHOOL, SOCIAL, BUSINESS, AND FAMILY LIFE.

VISUALIZATION ~~IMAGINE YOURSELF~~ YOU CAN LEARN TO COMMUNICATE ~~ING~~ MORE EFFECTIVELY AND MORE CONFIDENTLY - WHETHER YOU'RE SPEAKING TO ONE, OR ONE THOUSAND.

ACTION ~~CHECK OUT~~ YOU CAN FIND THESE COURSES (hold up page from Schedule) LISTED UNDER SPEECH IN THE DE ANZA COLLEGE SCHEDULE, ~~AND~~ REGISTER FOR THE COURSE AND TIME THAT WORKS FOR YOU.

CLINCHER YOU MIGHT SAY THE NEW OLD SAYING IS, "IF YOU CAN'T SAY SOMETHING NICE, AT LEAST LEARN TO SAY IT WELL"

Student PSA

ATTENTION STEP: Would you believe that Ivory soap, a product ~~that~~ many people use on their babies, has killed over 400,000 animals?

PROBLEM: The sad fact is, that since 1983, 400,000 animals have been sacrificed for the sake of research ~~of~~ Procter and Gamble products, like Ivory Soap.

SOLUTION: Fortunately for these animals there are over 70 non-profit groups working for animal rights and animal welfare in this country.

VISUALIZATION: By becoming involved in a local animal welfare group, such as South Bay In Defense of Animals, you can help keep the number of dying animals from rising each year.

ACTION: For more information on South Bay In Defense of Animals, you can call (hold up card) 408-293-8626, and ~~start helping~~ get involved now before another animal is killed.

CLINCHER: Hopefully someday Ivory soap, along with all Proctor and Gamble products, will be as safe for animals as it is for babies.

.2

Student PSA

Attention Step:

Many of us are looking forward to this Christmas season when we can toss our troubles aside, curl up in front of the fire with a good book and enjoy a hot cup of cocoa.

Problem:

Unfortunately, hundreds of underprivileged children in the Bay Area will go without warmth or gifts this Christmas.

Solution:

The Literacy Alliance for the South Bay is giving you an opportunity to give the Gift of Reading by asking you to donate new or like-new books to these underprivileged children ~~throughout the Bay Area.~~

Visualization:

Having books of their own could lead these children to a love of reading and learning that would enrich their entire lives.

Action:

You can give the gift of reading by simply dropping off your unwrapped books at any participating Arby's Restaurant in the South Bay ~~or~~ for more information about the program, contact the Gift of Reading at 408-920-5014.

Clincher:

Help to brighten these childrens' worlds, give the Gift of Reading.